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The G. O. P. and the Cuban Issue

Stealing of Republican 'Thunder' in Case Believed Wise Course for Kennedy

President Kennedy would be well advised to spend less time explaining the Cuban fiasco to Richard Nixon, Gov. Rockefeller and Senator Goldwater and more attention to training some Democratic commandos to steal the Republican thunder on this issue.

For in case his legislative leaders have neglected to tip him off, he has less chance of persuading the main body of Republicans in Congress to lay off his Cuban errors than Fidel Castro has of being named the father of the year.

House Republican Leader Halleck is pacing the Capitol corridors like a caged tiger. Almost visibly trembling on his bitter lips are the attacks Mr. Kennedy made in last fall's campaign against the Eisenhower Cuba policy.

Mr. Halleck's partner in the Ev and Charlie show, Senate Republican Leader Dirksen, is maintaining his more - in - sorrow - than - in - anger stance, but his power to resist the temptation to use his famous eloquence is demonstrably limited. Anyway, there are plenty of other Republican Senators eager to start the battle.

For some curious reason,

Mr. Kennedy, who fought his own war for the Presidency so harshly and well, seems reluctant to recognize that the American President cannot escape even worse political wars, especially when the tide seems to be against him. A major blunder has been made, he is admirably ready to accept responsibility and to investigate.

But for survival purposes, there is no advice comparable to that of the Civil War General who attributed his own successes to his ability to "get there fustest with the mostest."

The grand seigneurs who head the congressional committees already are enjoying the many plushy rewards of White House power. But apparently they need some kind of carrot or stick to persuade them to undertake the effort to keep the administration off the defensive.

It is clear to Mr. Nixon among others that it is destined for that unenviable position, so frustrating to executive energies. His sensitive political antenna quickly picked up the news that he was thought to be too kind to Mr. Kennedy in his

own Cuban remarks, hence his attack on Interior Secretary Udall.

Mr. Udall had grasped the politics of the situation with laudable speed, but he has not yet the national stature to put across an Ickes-style flame-thrower.

Mr. Nixon also is urging his friends in Congress to limit their commitments to any Kennedy solution. Thus he personally is in a position to play it either way, depending on the shape of the issue as 1962 approaches.

Senator Javits of New York, a spokesman for progressive Republicanism, is preparing to deliver an appeal for Republican moderation on the Cuban issue. How much—or how little—backing he gets in the ensuing debate will be revealing. He at least will keep one door open to some bi-partisanship.

That Mr. Kennedy should wish to confer with his predecessors in the presidency is natural and right. It is no disrespect to them to say that their political wars are ended, and his are but beginning.

Meanwhile, the Capital is full of rumors, the most interesting being that the President may appoint brother Robert, now Attorney General, to be head of the beleaguered CIA.